UNITED NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/ICEF/1991/SR.4
2 May 1991
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND

EXECUTIVE BOARD

1991 regular session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 4th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 22 April 1991, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Ms. PALME (Sweden)

CONTENTS

Opening statements of the Chairman of the Executive Board and of the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund

Adoption of the agenda

General debate

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent to Ms. M. A. Cuna, Office of the Secretary of the Executive Board, room H-12K, UNICEF House, 3 United Nations Plaza, New York.

Any corrections to the records of the meetings of this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

OPENING STATEMENTS OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD AND OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND

1. The CHAIRMAN opened the session.

2. She then made a general survey. Since the last regular session, the world had again gone through dark times. The situation in the Persian Gulf had preoccupied much of the world for the past nine months, and it had caused - and continued to cause - much suffering to civilian populations, especially children. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) was involved in the concerted efforts of the United Nations system to alleviate that suffering. Unless humankind renounced armed conflicts, coming generations would compromise hope for a better world for children. That hope must be based on concrete action for the survival, development and protection of children and, if necessary, their recovery and social reintegration, as explicitly stipulated in article 39 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention, together with the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s and the Plan of Action adopted at the World Summit for Children, constituted the legal, moral and political instruments for attaining that goal.

3. African children - both boys and girls - deserved special attention. Already the poorest of continents a decade ago, Africa had registered a further 20 per cent drop in its per capita income in its sub-Saharan region. In southern Africa, apartheid had wrecked development efforts. In many countries, unfavourable terms of trade and debt-serving were aggravating already precarious conditions. Africa, which had the world's fastest population growth and was increasingly stricken by drought and shaken by civil unrest, was very far from achieving the goals which it had set for itself. Children were the first victims of that situation which, in many countries, was further imperilled by the ravages of AIDS and insufficient resources for providing adequate nutrition and education. Those numerous obstacles could be overcome only through effective cooperation among the African countries themselves, donor agencies and international and non-governmental organizations. In that regard, she welcomed the presence, for the first time, of an independent Namibia at the current session of the Executive Board.

4. The entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child less than one year after its adoption had been a very positive development. Far from being a dream as some people had claimed, the Convention, to which 77 States had already acceded, was the fruit of a vision without which mankind was lost. The Executive Board must define the role of UNICEF in the efforts to make the Convention a reality. The World Summit for Children, whose Declaration had been signed by over 100 countries, had also been a success. As part of the follow-up activities, the Executive Board should consider how to make the most of that remarkable opportunity. The solemn commitments which had been made should be a continuing source of inspiration for action at all

(The Chairman)

levels in favour of all children. In 1990, the goals of the universal child immunization programme had been achieved, and immunization rates had risen from less than 20 per cent in 1981 to around 80 per cent in 1990; that was perhaps the most remarkable success of all. Much, of course, remained to be done but, overall, a very firm base had been laid for sustainability of mother and child health and, in particular, for combating acute respiratory infections, malaria, AIDS, maternal mortality and malnutrition. Her visit to Latin America earlier in the year had made her aware of the interest of the countries of the region in the basic services which UNICEF emphasized.

5. With respect to the Fund's budget, which would be examined at the current session, there was a need for a much better balance of contributions. The major donors must be joined by a greater number of richer nations in order to ensure a more equitable sharing of the costs and to provide UNICEF with a more solid base for financing its activities.

6. Children were human beings at the very height of their physical and psychological development. Children could not wait; the worst crime was to abandon them.

7. Mr. GRANT (Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund) said that 1990 had been a historic year for children, full of promise and real achievements. First, the Convention on the Rights of the Child had entered into force in September 1990, only a few months after it had been opened for signature. The Convention, which had already become the law of the land in 77 countries and would soon be applicable in most of the others, had also served as the basis for a common strategy for securing basic education for all by the year 2000. The World Conference on Education for All (Jomtien, Thailand, March 1990) had been for education what the Alma Ata Conference had been for primary health care. Moreover, at its 1990 session, the Executive Board had identified ambitious but nevertheless realistic goals and strategies for the next 10 years, which had been widely accepted and had served as a basis for consensus at the World Summit for Children held a few months later. The needs of children had been discussed at the highest possible level and had been brought to the attention of the whole world. The Summit's World Declaration and Plan of Action set very specific goals, many with measurable targets and deadlines for their achievement, and provided for follow-up measures at the national and international levels. The universal child immunization programme, which was the largest peace-time collaborative effort, had made it possible to protect 80 per cent of the world's children from diseases which were preventable by vaccination (and, in particular, to save the lives of some 3 million children each year), to establish an infrastructure capable of sustaining immunization and providing a base for other advances in general health, and to demonstrate that, given the right conditions, ambitious goals could be achieved. Moreover, development planning had turned decidedly towards the human dimension, which was in keeping with the concerns of the Fund for adjustment with a human face. The year 1990 had also witnessed the end of the cold war, which had opened the way to innovative approaches to world problems. It was to be hoped that the Gulf war tragedy had been only an isolated aberration in the current climate of détente.

(Mr. Grant)

8. During the decade ahead, which was full of promise for children, UNICEF would have to fulfil, as effectively as possible, the multiple functions required by the different areas of activity to which he had referred in his report (E/ICEF/1991/2 (Part II)), by relying on its considerable experience, its vast network of alliances and its capacity to mobilize goodwill everywhere. In the 1980s, the Fund had sought to sharpen and strengthen its field work. Its current goal, however, no longer was to broaden its activities but to help countries implement the goals and strategies which the Executive Board had established in 1990.

9. The Plan of Action adopted at the World Summit for Children was an unprecedentedly detailed framework, which had been endorsed at the highest level; it gave children absolute priority with respect to resource allocation and set quantifiable goals to be accomplished within concrete time-frames. It was applicable to all children without exception and it called upon all segments of society to participate. The Plan also established a global monitoring process and urged countries to make the necessary resources available. The United Nations had pledged its full support in helping countries fulfil the commitments of the World Summit for Children, commitments to which the General Assembly had drawn attention in its resolution 45/217. The executive heads of all relevant agencies seemed to consider the Plan of Action as an effective way of strengthening and extending organizational programmes affecting the condition of children (the Fund's own programme of action was contained in document E/ICEF/1991/12). All resident coordinators of the United Nations system had been asked to examine how the activities of the respective organizations could be used to reinforce national strategies.

10. First of all, UNICEF should consider how to strengthen its activities at the country level. For that the Fund would have to strengthen both its field offices - by taking measures in the areas of personnel (staff and training), procurement (methods and quality) and exchange of information, and by improving cooperation with other organizations, strengthening inter-agency collaboration mechanisms, accelerating of applied research, developing more explicit strategies in certain areas and making use of various mechanisms to facilitate and speed up programme implementation - and support capacity at headquarters. As the Board of Auditors had indicated in its report on UNICEF for the biennium ending 31 December 1989 (A/45/5/Add.2), UNICEF did not have at headquarters the support staff required to ensure effective implementation of substantive policies and programmes; that situation was likely to become even worse in the 1990s. Although the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) considered that UNICEF headquarters staff had been growing disproportionately in numbers and grade level as compared with the growth of staff in the field, that conclusion had not been corroborated by the findings of the Board of Auditors or by the figures themselves. The number of field posts had increased 61 per cent since 1982 and should increase another 10 per cent by 1993, while support capacity at headquarters had grown at the far slower rate of 23 per cent annually.

(Mr. Grant)

11. The budget proposals for 1992-1993 reflected the need for a modest strengthening of headquarters capacity. The goal was to balance programme and budgetary expenditure within a realistic income scenario to ensure adequate future liquidity provisions and an average annual growth rate for general resources programme expenditures that outpaced the growth of the administrative budget. It was necessary to be concerned whether the Fund's anticipated increase in income, which was entirely dependent on voluntary contributions, would materialize over the budget period through 1993. The medium-term plan projected an average growth of total income of 5.2 per cent annually for the period 1991-1994, well below the average for the past 10 years. However, income in 1990 had increased far more rapidly than projected (22 per cent), particularly as a result of private sector fund-raising and the very good results from the Fund's greeting cards operation. The Executive Board could therefore expect that UNICEF projected income in the coming budgetary period would materialize.

12. It would be heldpful if the Board provided comments and guidance on a number of important issues: how to sustain the success of universal child immunization; how to come up with $20 million in additional resources which would be needed annually by 1995 to achieve the goals for the 1990s; the very special priority for Africa, which faced increasingly serious problems, in particular AIDS; and the continuing burden of debt in Africa and much of Latin America.

13. In emergency situations, UNICEF worked closely with the World Food Programme (WFP), with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and with the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator (UNDRO). There was increasing demand on UNICEF, as indicated by the results of its emergency appeals for funds; that was due to the growing acceptance that assistance should reach vulnerable groups trapped in conflict areas. UNICEF was actively supporting United Nations efforts to assist Iraqi refugees. Significant parts of Africa were currently facing disaster on a scale comparable to that of 1984-1985, and the Executive Board would have to provide advice and guidance in that area as well.

14. UNICEF was at a crucial period in its history. It had amply demonstrated its competence and enjoyed the support of the public and of Governments of virtually all nations; its objectives were clearly defined and the world political climate was very conducive to constructive action. Perhaps some had accused it of too ambitious goals and of having created unrealizable expectations. That was not the case, since the 3.5 million children whose lives had been saved in 1990 alone were proof of that fact. There was no need to be afraid of having high expectations as long as sustained efforts were made to fulfil them.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

15. The agenda was adopted.

16. The CHAIRMAN said that the deadline for submission of draft proposals emanating from the general debate was 6 p.m. on Wednesday, 24 April. Draft proposals emanating from the Programme Committee and, to the extent possible, from the Committee on Administration and Finance, should be submitted within 24 hours of the introduction of the relevant agenda item. She also gave a number of instructions regarding the organization of work and drew attention to the two events which UNICEF had organized in connection with the session.

17. Mr. WILLIAMS (Secretary of the Executive Board) announced the schedule of informal meetings for the current session.

GENERAL DEBATE

18. Mr. RANSOME-KUTI (Nigeria) said that Nigeria was continuing to take resolute steps to ensure the survival, protection and development of Nigerian children. It had made considerable progress towards establishing a national primary health system which provided a range of integrated health services. Its decentralization policy was aimed at transferring the responsibility for providing such services to the local authorities. In 1991, all administrative divisions would develop their own primary health care networks. The Bamako Initiative was now better understood and accepted by the international community. In Nigeria, the Initiative had helped restore public confidence in the health services and strengthen the capacity of communities to manage and finance health systems at the district or village level.

19. Over 80 per cent of Nigerian children had received the anti-tuberculosis vaccine (BCG), the diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus vaccine (DPT3) and the poliomyelitis vaccine (POLIO3), and 73.3 per cent of pregnant women had been vaccinated against tetanus. However, the success of child survival programmes would result in a population explosion whose effects would have to be attenuated by the immediate implementation of effective family planning programmes.

20. He welcomed the emphasis accorded to women's health issues by UNICEF. WHO had estimated that nearly 500,000 died yearly world-wide from complications of childbirth and pregnancy. Those appalling figures reflected the low status of women in society. The biological, social, economic, cultural and other factors affecting women's health must be aggressively addressed; and gender inequality with regard to education, care and feeding must be combated. Nigeria had already taken steps to enhance the status of women, particularly in rural areas, and was currently considering legislation to raise the marriage age of girls to 18 years as well as measures to provide incentives to keep women in school up to that age.

21. The efforts in the area of rural water supply were beginning to yield tangible results and should make it possible to eradicate guinea-worm disease by 1995. In view of the spread of AIDS, his delegation noted with satisfaction the increased cooperation between WHO and UNICEF to combat the disease which, according to WHO estimates, had already struck 500,000 children

(Mr. Ransome-Kuti, Nigeria)

under 5 years of age in Africa. He also admired the skill and speed with which UNICEF had responded to emergency situations: Operation Lifeline Sudan was an example of that. Furthermore, he welcomed the crusade by UNICEF for debt relief for poor countries and its advocacy of adjustment with a human face.

22. As the Executive Director had stated, the international community would have a unique opportunity in the 1990s, thanks to new and more effective health technologies and the organization of health services, to combat diseases. He hoped that that progress would enable the agencies concerned to tackle health problems in a concerted, coordinated and integrated manner.

23. Mr. ELIASSON (Sweden) said that 1990, which had been marked by the World Summit for Children, the adoption of the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, had been a year of many promises for children. Constant efforts would be necessary, however, to keep those promises in spite of often adverse conditions - natural disasters, environmental degradation and the spread of AIDS, for example. Children were often the first victims of those tragedies.

24. An international consensus was gradually emerging on how to meet development challenges. In an increasingly interdependent world, the international community had the responsibility to enhance support for national efforts. The United Nations system had an important role to play in all aspects of development - human resources development, national responsibility and capacity-building, sustainable development and so forth. UNICEF had been particularly active in working closely with Governments, community leaders and non-governmental organizations. That cooperation was the key to success.

25. The Plan of Action for implementing the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children set forth a set of specific goals and clear guidelines. In order to implement the Declaration and Plan of Action, UNICEF must endeavour above all strengthen and accelerate its traditional programme activities, essentially playing a supportive and catalytic role since the Plan of Action also required cooperation by other United Nations agencies and strong international support. In that connection, Sweden urged other donor countries to intensify their efforts to allocate 0.7 per cent of their GNP to official development assistance. If that agreed objective was achieved, an additional $50 billion would be released every year and the Fund's budget would be virtually doubled.

26. A comprehensive approach, integrated programmes for primary health care, and activities in the field of education were crucial factors for any successful strategy for child survival and development. To achieve those objectives, UNICEF must make optimal use of its resources; in other words, it must cooperate closely with other United Nations agencies. Together with WHO and UNESCO, the Fund had for a long time been stressing the importance of social indicators, such as infant mortality rates, nutritional levels,

(Mr. Eliasson, Sweden)

immunization coverage, school enrolments and literacy rates. The assistance provided by UNICEF to Governments in establishing those indicators had been essential. Furthermore, its increased cooperation with UNFPA in family planning and WHO/UNDP in combating AIDS was indeed welcome.

27. Inter-agency cooperation had become a key element in responding to increasingly complex emergency situations, of which the refugee situation in Iraq and that of the drought victims in Africa were tragic examples. The United Nations system, however, had not always proved to be an effective instrument and improvements were still called for. The recent adjustments made by UNICEF to streamline and improve its activities were therefore encouraging.

28. UNICEF had often been innovative in reaching children in emergencies caused by armed conflict; the "corridors of peace" in the Sudan and the "days of tranquillity" in El Salvador were examples to be followed. Furthermore, far too many children lived in urban slums and were the victims of abuse, neglected, or forced into labour and prostitution. Speedy action was necessary to facilitate their physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration, as article 39 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child rightly stipulated.

29. Children, who were the future of mankind, must be at the top of the international community's agenda. Mankind must learn from history in order to build a satisfactory common future.

30. Mr. TRAXLER (Italy) said that his Government had played a very active role at the World Summit for Children, for which it had been the third major financial contributor. In general, the entire Italian society made an effective contribution to initiatives for the benefit of children. He paid tribute in that regard to Mr. Aldo Farina, Chairman of the Italian National Committee, who had devoted his life to the welfare of children and whose dedication had been decisive in gaining public support for UNICEF.

31. In the past decade, Italy had become the third donor to the Fund's general resources. It had continued to increase considerably its contributions in spite of severe budgetary restrictions which had forced it to reduce its contributions to other agencies. Italy hoped to be able to maintain its contribution level, subject to an annual review of UNICEF activities, which must justify the effort undertaken. The issue of resources was essential: needs were enormous and resources scarce. The Fund could not always count on the same small group of donors and must increase its efforts to find other fund contributors. Nevertheless, since it could hardly expect a dramatic increase in its funds, UNICEF must have a realistic budget and use it in the most effective manner.

32. That required genuine coordination among the various agencies, particularly a rational distribution of tasks within the United Nations

(Mr. Traxler, Italy)

system; and the cross-sectoral activities of UNICEF should be harmonized with those of other organizations having primary responsibilities in the same areas. The Fund should also establish a clearer and more realistic set of priorities. His Government, for its part, had already taken measures at the national level for the implementation of article 34 of the Plan of Action. At the international level, it would place even more emphasis on child welfare by strengthening the provisions specifically aimed at improving the situation of the most vulnerable groups in developing countries, for example through its PRODERE programme, devoted to refugees in Central America, and its project to help street children being carried out in Argentina.

33. Lastly, UNICEF should remain primarily a development organization devoted to programme delivery, with clear and relevant strategies. Although advocacy, information and mobilization were important activities, they must be instrumental to that end. That was the background against which the Government of Italy would assess the quality of the Fund's work, which should be planned and evaluated according to a few clear criteria: contribution to national capacity-building; technical and financial sustainability of projects, decentralization of basic services, participation of local communities, including non-governmental organizations; and emphasis on training at all levels. Those key criteria were also at the core of major General Assembly resolutions, particularly the Declaration on International Economic Cooperation. UNICEF should devote less effort and fewer resources to promotional activities and should do much more to enhance the quality of aid and its effective absorption by the recipient countries. The Board had approved a number of goals and strategies in 1990 and the World Summit for Children had adopted a fundamental Plan of Action. The secretariat should now devote its resources primarily to the effective implementation of those measures in the field.

34. UNICEF activities in support of child protection and development in Central and Eastern Europe, where conditions affecting children were very difficult in some areas, were another important problem. The small unit which dealt with that region had been set up only very recently and no one as yet had a clear picture of the situation, or a strategy or plan of action. The first priority should be to send missions to those countries where there seemed to be the greatest need, including Albania, and make a proper assessment of actual requirements and possible emergency measures so that the Board could then be in a position to envisage a clear course of action.

35. He stressed once again the fundamental importance of coordinating emergency assistance within the United Nations. Italy had noted, particularly in the case of Africa and the Gulf, that UNICEF had acted without taking account of concurrent interventions by other agencies and bilateral donors. That had impaired effectiveness and had led to negative financial consequences; thus, Italy was seriously concerned about the high level of the unfunded balance of UNICEF emergency initiatives. The Director-General for Development and International Economic Cooperation was entitled to play a

(Mr. Traxler, Italy)

coordinating role in emergency operations. All requirements for funding should be submitted by the Secretary-General and coordinated by the Director-General. Specific coordinating tasks should be entrusted by the Secretary-General to a lead agency for each specific situation.

36. More generally, inter-agency cooperation was essential for the smooth and effective functioning of the United Nations system since programme activities were increasingly cross-sectoral and drew upon the competence of several organizations. His delegation therefore had noted with interest the aide-mémoire on African health, signed on 16 January 1991 by UNICEF and the World Bank. The United Nations system already had a broad range of guiding principles, as set out, in particular, in the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade. That document and General Assembly resolution 44/211 should serve as the basis for work by UNICEF and the other agencies, under the leadership of the Director-General for Development and International Economic Cooperation.

37. Lastly, the budget should be carefully reviewed. As the resources entrusted to UNICEF increased, the budget must be given to greater scrutiny. There was a need for a substantial change in the way in which the budget was submitted to the Board and the manner in which the Board examined and approved its provisions. The time had come for the Board to exercise its budgetary prerogatives more strictly by giving greater guidance and requiring a higher level of accountability on the part of the secretariat.

38. Mr. MONTAÑO (Mexico) said that, after the profound changes that had taken place on the international political scene, one might hope to see greater international cooperation and the establishment of a "new order", which must of necessity lead to the elimination of inequalities and the correction of imbalances. Nevertheless, one might also fear that the break with the past was only partial and that most of the developing world remained immersed in the economic and social crisis. That was the case with regard to most of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. In spite of all the efforts to promote recovery, poverty was spreading and women and children were among the most affected.

39. After the World Summit for Children, which the current Mexican Government had called for, it was necessary to concretize at the national and international levels the commitments undertaken in order to ensure that justice and development were realities in the world of tomorrow. Mexico, for its part, oriented its activities concerning children, women and youth in a direction that was totally in keeping with the priorities of the Plan of Action adopted at the Summit and fully integrated UNICEF in them. The Government had already organized the first national meeting to assess and follow up the World Summit, reaffirming its firm resolve to improve the living conditions of children, even if it had to overcome very complex problems in order to do so, and strengthening its social protection activities to benefit that group. A second meeting would be held in the near future in order to

(Mr. Montaño, Mexico)

draw up a national programme on health, education, food, and water and sanitation. It should also be pointed out that Mexico had been at the forefront of efforts to assist children living in particularly difficult conditions - the victims of poverty and violence, the children of uprooted parents, street children exposed to all types of dangers - who until then had been the forgotten group in the development process.

40. The budget was one of the most important questions at the current session. While donors had considerably increased their contributions, steps should be taken to ensure that those funds were put to best use. UNICEF should focus its activities as a matter of priority on developing countries and, after an in-depth analysis, the modalities and limits of the Fund's cooperation with countries that did not belong to that category should then be determined.

41. The conflict in the Persian Gulf had had an impact on many countries. The main victims of the conflict were children. Only several months after solemn commitments had been undertaken at the World Summit, the Organization was unable to provide them with the humanitarian assistance that they urgently needed. That failure to act, which had further increased the number of victims, made one wonder about the ability of the United Nations to adapt to the pressure of circumstances in order to provide humanitarian assistance. The role of the various international agencies that had the task of providing assistance should be reviewed very carefully because mere rhetoric and good intentions did not suffice in emergency situations. In conditions where planning was often impossible, there was a need for flexible structures which were supported by sufficient resources and could focus and coordinate efforts. In all emergency situations - that in the Middle East was but one of many - it would be necessary in the future to take steps to ensure not only the financing, but also the speediness of interventions.

42. Mr. DAUFRESNE de la CHEVALERIE (France) noted with satisfaction that the World Summit for Children had laid down precise guidelines and put forward concrete proposals. There was now a need to ensure that the commitments undertaken at the Summit were fulfilled. UNICEF could rely on France, where various initiatives for the benefit of children were being carried out. Accordingly, the International Child Centre, which had already sponsored a world round-table discussion with UNICEF in March 1989, had recently organized a seminar on the status of children in the French legal system. It had also organized a number of other activities as part of the Bamako Initiative, including two meetings on essential medical supplies in developing countries. The French UNICEF Committee, which was also very active, was endeavouring to promote awareness of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in schools. Furthermore, in response to the wishes of the Prime Minister, a committee would be set up in the near future in order to follow up the Summit: that national structure for reflection and coordination would be given the task of implementing the Plan of Action in France.

(Mr. Daufresne de la Chevalerie, France)

43. In view of the increasing demands, UNICEF must be pragmatic and effective and must sometimes orient its activities within the general framework of assistance to disaster-stricken population groups, by linking them of necessity to those of other organizations that pursued humanitarian objectives. The Fund had carried out remarkable work in Liberia, Kuwait, Iraq and among the Kurdish population groups. Nevertheless, perfect coordination between the various assistance agencies was still necessary. For that reason, UNICEF should be better represented among the other humanitarian organizations in Geneva. It would therefore be to the Fund's advantage, for example with regard to emergency assistance, to have a decentralized structure with the necessary authority to enable it to carry out its role.

44. However, the needs of emergency operations should not distract UNICEF from its primary mission: long-term efforts in the field. While highly encouraging results had been achieved with regard to immunization coverage, child health, nutrition and sanitation, it should none the less be recognized that, in many countries, health indicators had declined and health services had deteriorated. Those who suffered as a result were the most vulnerable groups, especially children. UNICEF activities should take place within a time-frame which would ensure that they were sufficiently cost-effective, even at the expense of the main vertical programmes, which were often over-ambitious in relation to the meagre benefits which target populations derived from them. His delegation had therefore noted with great satisfaction that there was a real desire to strengthen, or at least to maintain, the results of ongoing projects, particularly those of the universal immunization programme.

45. budgetary discipline and effective management were more necessary than ever, in order to enable UNICEF to continue its efforts on behalf of countries which were most in need, particularly in Africa. The strengthening of UNICEF financial management appeared to be conducive to that objective. In responding to the new requests for assistance, UNICEF must not dissipate its efforts and financial resources, but should concentrate on its mandate, namely, efforts on behalf of the developing countries.

46. UNICEF was perhaps not the most appropriate forum for discussion of the debt problem. The heavily indebted countries had obtained significant relief by addressing themselves to the bodies which were truly competent in that area, namely, the Paris Club, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. However, it was indeed essential to take into account the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s. As expressly stated therein, "The ... UNICEF goals and strategies for the 1990s should serve as important priority guidelines", since the countries concerned believed that any measures of social and economic development which they might adopt would remain to a great extent ineffective without improvements in the health standards of their populations. It would therefore be necessary to reconcile the needs of the Programme of Action with those of the Plan of Action adopted at the World Summit for Children, so that UNICEF could give priority to the least developed countries.

(Mr. Daufresne de la Chevalerie, France)

47. There were already signs that the next 10 years would be extremely difficult. While UNICEF needed to re-evaluate a number of posts in order to meet that challenge, it must at the same time strengthen its efforts in the field. Furthermore, UNICEF should seek increased exchanges and closer relations with all agencies carrying out similar activities. Organizations such as the International Children's Centre in France and the National Committees for UNICEF, which contributed to UNICEF funding and constituted a remarkable network for influencing national authorities and public opinion, were valuable partners. The French National Committee for UNICEF, for instance, had raised $22 million in 1990 through a public campaign.

48. Mrs. PAZ-ZAMORA (Bolivia) said that her country had recently signed the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at the World Summit for Children, and was in the process of setting up a high-level national commission which would be responsible for drawing up, by the end of 1991, a plan of action focusing on immunization, the promotion of breast-feeding and the control of iodine deficiency disorders. Furthermore, a national plan was being carried out to improve children's chances for survival and development, as well as maternal health; it, too, was in line with the objectives outlined at the Summit. Note should also be taken of the work of the National Commission on Solidarity and Social Development, which was mainly responsible for implementing the country's social development policy concerning minors, the elderly, social programmes in the urban environment and disadvantaged areas. Lastly, all sectors of Bolivian society were taking part in the efforts to protect children.

49. Bolivia, which had been one of the first countries to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child, would shortly adopt a new code to protect minors, together with various other legal instruments and a set of practical measures. In dealing with children and youth, priority was given to preventive efforts, such as reintegrating them into their families and communities, in accordance with the Convention and the principles laid down at the World Summit, rather than placing them in special institutions. Immunization was one of the country's main priorities. Although the objective of 80 per cent coverage which had been fixed for 1990 had not been achieved, major progress had nevertheless been made in the past five years through a series of intensive campaigns. Bolivia was aware that improving the status of women would automatically improve that of children and families and social conditions in general, and had decided to promote the integration of women into social development. It had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1989, and was planning to introduce a set of measures which would enable women to take part in public affairs.

50. Bolivia was grateful for the assistance provided to it by UNICEF, which was receptive to its needs and evaluated them objectively. With regard to the UNICEF budget, there should be no dichotomy between headquarters and the field offices, which together formed a unit to assist children; it was merely

(Mrs. Paz-Zamora, Bolivia)

necessary to strengthen their respective means of action. The function of headquarters was to provide the best possible support to the field offices so that they, in turn, could assist countries in their efforts. It was necessary to find the right balance between the two components, without separating them.

51. It was to be hoped that a way could be found, through the technical and administrative mechanisms of UNICEF, to increase the funds allocated to countries which, like Bolivia, had the greatest needs. Donor countries should also take immediate action to provide the amount of $16 million which was still outstanding for the period 1989-1993.

52. Bolivia had undertaken a stringent adjustment programme which had already produced excellent results, but it remained one of the poorest countries and was sinking under its burden of external debt, which fell most heavily on the poorest sectors of the population. Her country had decided to invest public funds first and foremost in building up its "human capital", through efforts to meet the basic needs of rural areas, to fight poverty and to integrate women into the development process. To do that, however, it was critically in need of international assistance in the form of investment aid and technical assistance. That was essential in order to enable Bolivia to pursue its structural adjustment and thereby to achieve a quality of growth which would have an especially beneficial impact on children. Children should not be considered in isolation, as a mere programme element; they were vital to society and should be central to development policies.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.